

Facilitating Professional Learning:

What does it mean to be a facilitator?

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Six Themes of Facilitation

1. Connecting through dialogue
 2. Trust
 3. Facilitation or presentation?
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Thinking together about: What does it mean to be a facilitator? (role, tensions, motivators)

4. Teacher efficacy
5. Adult learner and facilitation
6. Characteristics of high quality professional learning

1. Connecting through Dialogue

- We develop deep and meaningful connections with others when we have SHARED EXPERIENCES
- The shared experiences are not opinions, they are stories (and actions) about ourselves that resonate for and with others



Through sharing our experiences, rather than opinions, we start to notice wider, more distant ways of seeing and thinking, without judgment



We broaden our perspective



And learn more detailed ways of seeing

We celebrate and learn from variation



Gadamer named this: Fusing Horizons



So Let's Do Some Math as a Point of Common Experience (to aim at fusing our horizons)

Without recording anything, just do this in your head... Mental math:

$$348 + 494$$

What Were You Thinking?

All these different ways of thinking about the same question!

In the classroom:

“Let’s try Marla’s way of thinking.

Was it helpful for you? Why or why not?”

“Now let’s try Stan’s way of thinking.

Was it efficient for you? Did it suit you?”

Dialogue VS Discussion

Dialogue: What are we thinking?

- Dialogue is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand one another's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions
 - Exploration of ideas
 - Thinking about different perspectives
 - Suspending decision making

Discussion: What will we do?

- Discussions are organized, collective efforts in critical thinking. The goal is to reach decisions that stay made
 - In search of a decisions
 - Goal setting and working to action
 - Analysing and dissecting


Consider...

Make a mental note
about
one or two of these
statements

The greatest sin is fear
The greatest recreation is work
The greatest calamity is hopelessness
The greatest bravery is patience
The greatest teacher is experience
The greatest secret is death
The greatest honour is faith
The greatest profit is a good child
The greatest present is indulgence
The greatest capital is self reliance

The first leader of Moslem Alisay

**A dialogue would
allow us to talk
about these ideas
creatively
(neglected in work
situations but lays
the groundwork for)**

**Discussion: might
lead us to selecting
one or two of these
as a focus for
actions**

2. A Foundation of Trust

- What makes you trust someone?
 Personally? Professionally?
 Are these the same?
- What makes you trustworthy as a team leader / facilitator?

What I try to remind myself of ~ Developing Trust

1. Follow through on commitments.
2. Meet deadlines.
3. Trust begets trust: Trust others and they will trust me.
4. Give all the information I have, honestly.
5. Empower others by allowing for collective decision-making.
6. Resolve conflicts early by exploring alternatives.
7. Respect differences in people.
8. Show personal integrity.
9. LISTEN.

Low Trust or High Trust?

Low Trust Environment:

- Difficult communication
- Exhausting, time consuming
- Fear of being watched
- Risk and mistakes are discouraged or punished
- Production is imitative, sticking to the given parameters

High Trust Environment

- Easy communication
- Freedom to work in a variety of styles
- Risk and mistakes are anticipated and embraced as learning opportunities
- Production is innovative, expanding the boundaries

3. Facilitation versus Presentation

- Facilitation involves people working together alongside one another, to pursue areas of mutual interest, and focuses on a genuine inquiry (challenge)
- Presenting involves providing people with helpful information, possibly in very active ways, to amplify current thinking
- (Where) does 'presentation' fit in during 'facilitation'? Especially where math content or other input would be helpful in moving a team forward?
- How do we move from presentation to facilitation? OR between facilitation and presentation and back again?

Scenario One

Scenario 1: The team is deciding what to focus on for their math inquiry. They are leaning to a general inquiry about problem solving. As a knowledgeable facilitator you know that the research shows that selecting a precise math content focus (beyond an overall process) increases the depth of learning in PL communities.

What does the presenter do?

What does the facilitator do?

What might make 'best sense' in this situation?

Scenario Two

Scenario 2: The team is interested in trying out a problem with the students that is – in the facilitator's estimation – far too easy for the students (students are being under-estimated). The team is ready to jump into the classroom and try it out.

What does the presenter do?

What does the facilitator do?

What do you think might make 'best sense' in this situation?

Personal Reflection & Dialogue

1. What do you see as your role as a facilitator of professional learning?
2. What obstacles are you facing?
3. What excites or motivates you in your work as a facilitator?

Make notes for yourself.

Then we will have a broader dialogue about the role of a facilitator at your tables.

Table Dialogue

- We are not making decisions, we are expressing ideas openly and creatively
- Careful listening
- Sequential round table (make notes if helpful)
- Then a round of building on one another's thinking ("you helped me think about...")

ROLE

OBSTACLES

MOTIVATORS

Whole Group Discussion

- Comments on preliminary ideas about what we think the role of a facilitator of professional learning might involve
- This may be OUR COLLECTIVE QUESTION – we can refine our thinking along the way throughout math camp

ROLE

OBSTACLES

MOTIVATORS

Now With Your Table Group

Use chart paper and markers to make a collective list or make a preliminary diagram or chart or annotated illustration of your collective but tentative conclusions up to now:

What is your role as a facilitator of professional learning?

- Try to incorporate the challenges and tensions you are facing
- Try to incorporate what is exciting about facilitating professional learning

ROLE

OBSTACLES

MOTIVATORS

STRETCH

Things we do: Facilitator Role

R-List	Listener; echo back to the group, ears (ongoing)
R-Plan	Planner (before)
R-Obs	Observer; noticing and feeding back to the group, eyes (ongoing)
R-Coor	Coordinator; technical details, dates, time keeper (ongoing)
R-Ant	Anticipator; anticipate pathways of the group, accurate estimations of cultural capital of group members (before)
R-ST	Set tone for the group as interested learner, as a risk taker, being brave, set group at ease with humour or comments, value, honour and challenge (ongoing)
R-Nav	Navigator; narrow in and broaden out as needed, refine key questions and points of inquiry, move things forward linking ideas, gives opportunities for reflection, leaves responsibility for learning with the participants and synthesizes ideas (ongoing)
R-KO	Knowledgeable Other; prepare and bring content, materials and information to the group (ongoing)
R-Win	Window finder; find window to jump through to help the group leap forward (ongoing)
R-Coll	Collaborator (ongoing)
R-Dyn	Dynamics; intervening when necessary, group dynamics and management (ongoing)
R-Chall	Challenger; encourage positive dissonance, challenge preconceived notions, uncover misunderstandings, engage in discourse (ongoing)

Compare this list to your table thinking (fusing horizons)

Let's Try Coding Two Excerpts

- Read the transcript excerpts
- Select codes from the sheet
- If necessary, make up your own code (but see if your thinking might already be represented or embedded somewhere in the set of codes provided – in this case, you may wish to amplify the description of the code)

1. How did you prepare yourself in terms of content learning for this project?

Depending upon the type of session I was facilitating I may decide to do one of two things:

If I was working with a group of educators within a lesson study type of context I would approach the first meeting with a variety of text resources (professional books, articles on content) and use resources so that when we discuss the group's desired content focus I have "go to" resources that I rely upon to provide me with either background information or confirm content knowledge already held.

The second scenario might be that I am leading a professional learning session that requires some delivery of content. I believe that people learn best when they puzzle with ideas and discuss questions and content with each other. Within this type of professional learning framework I may provide some up front content and ask those present to play with it and discuss it using focused questions. In this case I would prepare by reading text resources, looking information up on line or consulting with knowledgeable others.

2. What strategies did you use to engage your participants in content learning throughout the process?

My preference is to have participants fully engaged in the mathematics. I would likely choose a rich problem solving task to help the participants enter into the content. I would include MANY opportunities for discussion and exploration of the content as well as the mathematical processes throughout the learning.

Co-operative learning strategies such as think-pair-share, table talk, placemat, etc. help provide a clearly defined structure within which participants can investigate the problem. Often professional articles that relate to the topic of the session are distributed ahead of time to enhance the conversations.

If time does not allow for pre-reading then there can be a place within a learning session for jigsawing an article or Ministry resource (e.g., monographs, content focused documents).

Whole Group

- What did you find out?
- How did the codes work? (Did you need to create new ones? Why? Did you amplify any descriptions?)
- What was difficult about this coding?
(remember I have just pulled two excerpts out of a longer interview)